Part 1

The Communication Environment

CHAPTER

Business Communication Foundations 1
Workplace Diversity 2
Technological, Legal, and Ethical Communication 3
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain why business communication is important to individuals and organizations.

2. List and explain the goals of business communication.

3. Describe the patterns of business communication.

4. Explain the communication process.

5. Identify communication barriers and describe ways to remove them.

LET’S TALK BUSINESS Communication is a vital part of life. I use it during most of my waking hours without really considering it, yet I am continually immersed in communication of one form or another. I use the media to determine how to dress for the day, to decide which roads to take to work, and to learn what’s making headlines around the globe. I use oral and written communication to share ideas, knowledge, and messages with others at work and home. Nonverbal communication helps me display thoughts and emotions.

Communication is important because it is the foundation of my personal and professional relationships. Communicating forms bonds and creates trust between people. At Musicland, I use various forms and techniques of communication during the course of my day to negotiate business, inform coworkers, and interact with colleagues. Keeping an open line of communication enables me to work effectively and make sound decisions.

Good communication skills are tools for achieving my goals and getting the results I want.
As Tara Benson notes in Let’s Talk Business, people spend the majority of their waking hours communicating. Because it is used so extensively, communication is one of the most important skills you can develop. How well you read, listen, speak, and write will affect the quality of your personal relationships and, as shown in Figure 1.1, help determine the progress you make in your career.

The Importance of Communicating Effectively

- **Getting Jobs You Want**  Effective communication will make it possible for you to design a powerful resume, compose a persuasive application letter, interview with poise and confidence, and get the job you want.
- **Gaining Promotions**  Moving ahead in your career depends on communicating your technical competence to others and maintaining effective relationships with them.
- **Providing Leadership**  Your ability to motivate and help others achieve rests on your understanding of human nature and on mastering communication skills.
- **Being Productive on the Job**  Work performance is enhanced by your ability to listen effectively, speak clearly, and write competently.
- **Relating Positively to Others**  Successful business and personal relationships depend on mutual trust and respect; communicating ethically, with concern and compassion, is essential.
- **Assuring the Success of Your Organization**  Your organization will succeed only if it has the support of its constituencies—support that comes from effectively communicating with customers or clients about the organization’s products or services.

Research with business professionals reveals that effective communication ranks high among the skills necessary to succeed in business. The number and types of work-related communication activities in which a person engages depend on his or her field and level of responsibility. For example, telemarketers spend the majority of their work hours placing calls to prospective customers; entry-level tax accountants devote the majority of their time to entering and manipulating data; public relations specialists gather information and write news releases; and human resource managers attend meetings, train employees, and prepare reports.

Businesses must have effective internal and external communication in order to succeed. Internal operations depend on the day-to-day exchange of information among employees. Performance objectives, job instructions, financial data, customer orders, inventory data, production problems and solutions, and employee production reports illustrate the range of internal communication exchanged in the course of business. Organizations accomplish long-range planning and strategic decision making by relying on research, reports, proposals, conferences, evaluations, and projections.

External communication builds goodwill, brings in orders, and ensures continued existence and growth. Day-to-day external communications include sales calls, product advertisements, news releases, employment notices, bank transactions, and periodic reports to governmental agencies. External communications that have a long-range impact include new product announcements, plant expansion plans, contributions to community activities, and annual reports.

As you can see from these examples, most business communication is transactional; it involves a give-and-take relationship between the sender and the receiver(s) in order to establish a common understanding. This interaction is the primary feature that distinguishes business writing from journalistic or creative writing.
Effective communication is essential to both you and the organization for which you work. The material in this book is designed to help you improve your ability to communicate. This chapter focuses on the goals, patterns, and process of communication. It also addresses communication barriers and ways to remove them. Later chapters provide more details about meeting the challenges of communicating in a business environment.

**Goals of Business Communication**

Effective business communication involves both the sender and the receiver, but the sender must take responsibility for achieving the four basic goals of business communication:

1. Receiver understanding
2. Receiver response
3. Favorable relationship
4. Organizational goodwill

The sender must take responsibility for achieving the four goals of business communication. Keep these goals in mind and assume responsibility for accomplishing them every time you initiate or respond to a message.

**Receiver Understanding**

The first goal of business communication, receiver understanding, is the most important. The message must be so clear that the receiver understands it as the sender means it to be understood.

For communication to be successful, the sender and receiver must achieve shared meaning. Suppose a supervisor sent an e-mail to a subordinate saying, “No one plans for a meeting like you do.” Should the worker react with pleasure or disappointment? Is the supervisor praising or criticizing the worker’s attention to detail? The message is too vague to guarantee receiver understanding. If a worker says “I’ll need time off to travel to my cousin’s wedding,” the sender and receiver might have different ideas about the length, type, and timing of the leave. The message would be clearer if the worker were to say, “I will be taking vacation August 5, 6, and 7.” Company policy and the work relationship between the sender and receiver would dictate whether the sender included the reason for the absence as part of the written or spoken message.

It is a challenge for the sender to achieve the goal of receiver understanding. To develop a clear message, the sender must consider the following four issues, which are discussed in detail later in this chapter:
Receiver Response

The second goal of business communication is receiver response. The receiver response may be positive, neutral, or negative. It may be conveyed through words, actions, or both. The situation will determine what is appropriate. If the chair of a committee distributes a memo announcing the time and date of a meeting, those who receive the memo may act in any of four ways. They may (1) notify the chair that they will attend, (2) notify the chair that they will be unable to attend, (3) attend without having notified the chair in advance, or (4) miss the meeting without providing advance notice. The first three actions achieve the goal of receiver response; the fourth does not.

Because this goal is achieved when the receiver demonstrates his or her understanding of the message by providing an appropriate response, a sender should assist the receiver to respond. The wording of the message should encourage response. In a face-to-face conversation, the sender (speaker) can ask the receiver (listener) if he or she understands the message. Further, the sender can ask directly for a specific response. When written messages are used, the sender can encourage a response by asking questions, enclosing a reply envelope, asking the receiver to telephone, or using any one of many other possibilities. For example, suppose a publisher receives a mail order for a cookbook, but the customer does not specify hard or soft binding. To get the information needed to fill the order, the clerk could phone; send an e-mail message; or write an inquiry letter and enclose a postage-paid, self-addressed reply card on which the customer can simply check the type of binding desired.

Favorable Relationship

The third goal of business communication—favorable relationship—focuses on the people involved in the communication process. To establish a strong business relationship, the sender and the receiver should relate to each other in three important ways: positively, personally, and professionally. They must create and maintain a favorable relationship.

Both the sender and the receiver will benefit from a favorable relationship. If the sender manufactures goods or provides services, a favorable relationship might mean job satisfaction, increased sales, and more profits. If the sender is a customer, a favorable relationship could lead to a continued source of supply, better prices, and assistance if problems develop.

The sender should assume primary responsibility for creating and maintaining a favorable relationship. Some of the ways the sender can do this include the following:

- Using positive wording
- Stressing the receiver’s interests and benefits
- Doing more than is expected

For example, suppose you have to refuse to work overtime on Wednesday. If you simply say “No,” you will do little to promote a favorable relationship with your supervisor. By offering to work overtime on Thursday or by finding someone who is willing
to work Wednesday, however, you will have helped your supervisor; you will have taken a positive approach and done more than was expected.

**Organizational Goodwill**

The fourth goal of business communication stresses benefit to the organization. The goodwill of customers or clients is essential to any business or organization. If a company has the goodwill of its customers, it has their confidence and often their continuing willingness to buy its products or services. The more goodwill a company has, the more successful it can be.

Senders of messages have a responsibility to try to increase goodwill for their organizations. They do so by ensuring that their communications reflect positively on the quality of the company’s products, services, and personnel.

An example of an employee building goodwill for an organization is found in the handling of returned merchandise. If store policy dictates that employees should accept returned merchandise even when the customer doesn’t have a receipt, the employee could say: “Would you prefer a refund or a replacement?” After the customer has chosen, the employee should complete the transaction quickly and courteously. Doing so might lead to repeat business for the company and enhance its reputation. This behavior allows the employee to generate goodwill for the store and achieve the fourth goal of business communication—organizational goodwill.

**Patterns of Business Communication**

As communicators strive to achieve the four goals of business communication, they send and receive messages that are both internal and external to their organizations. Some of these messages are formal, some are informal. Some messages are work related,
others are personal. As Christopher Zenk illustrates in the Communication Quote, internal communication is critical to his work at Accenture.

**COMMUNICATION QUOTE**

The nature of the consulting industry results in our employees being assigned to varied locations in every city and country in which we operate. Most of our people are engaged directly at client sites; very few actually work in Accenture’s own offices. I have responsibility for managing people in several cities in addition to Minneapolis and interact on a daily basis with dozens of people around the country. Despite my physical disconnection with these people, timely internal communication is critical. Some of this communication is conducted on the telephone—often in conference calls with numerous individuals. Voice mail and e-mail facilitate less-than-immediate communication. The various instant messaging utilities are quickly establishing themselves as invaluable communication tools, not to mention creating a new foreign language 4 u 2 learn and understand.  

—Christopher Zenk, Minneapolis Location Lead, Accenture Technology Solutions.  
(Photo courtesy of Christopher Zenk)

**Internal Communication Patterns**

As shown in Figure 1.2, organizational communication can flow vertically, horizontally, or through a network. In **vertical** communication, messages flow upward or downward along a path referred to as the “chain of command.” Reports and proposals commonly follow an upward path; policy statements, plans, directives, and instructions typically follow a downward path. As Betty Lou Marsaa notes in her Communication Quote, giving clear instructions is important in vertical communication. **Horizontal** message flow occurs between workers or units of comparable status who need to share data or coordinate efforts. In **network** communication, information flows freely among those who have a
common bond that goes beyond the participants’ role or unit within the organization. Members’ roles or status within the organization will generally have the greatest influence in vertical communication and the least influence in network communication.

COMMUNICATION QUOTE

Owning a small business is like having a small child to nurture and work with so it grows and develops. Good communication on a daily basis is of utmost importance. Never assume employees are going to perform all tasks you need done unless they have clear instructions.

—Betty Lou Marsaa, Owner, Betty Lou’s Health Foods, Inc. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Frey & Associates Photography)

A network may be a planned part of the business operation or it may arise from informal interactions. An example of a planned network is a project team formed to develop and market a new product. An informal network could consist of employees who share interests outside the workplace. Organization-based informal networks, such as company-sponsored softball teams, can be powerful. Members can discuss work-related issues outside the traditional communication structure and then combine efforts to influence the direction of the organization. Personal networks such as those consisting of friends and relatives, classmates and faculty, current and former employers, and current and former coworkers are important sources of professional and personal support.

Regardless of the direction in which it flows, communication may have a formal, an informal, or a serial pattern. In this section, formal and informal refer to the nature of a communication, not the writing or speaking style used to convey a message. You’ll learn more about communication style in later chapters.

FORMAL COMMUNICATION

Formal communication is business related, possibly with some personal touches. It can be written (memo, report, policy) or oral (speech, meeting). Most organizations keep written records of formal oral communication—copies of speeches, minutes of meetings. Formal communication

• Is planned by the organization
• Flows in all directions
• Is essential for the effective operation of the business

INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

Informal communication—sometimes referred to as a grapevine—consists of both business-related and personal information. Rumors about who is to become the new president of the company and a discussion of yesterday’s baseball scores are two examples. Most informal communication is oral, but widespread use of e-mail has made informal written communication more popular. Informal communication

• Is not planned by the organization
• Flows in all directions
• Develops and maintains positive human relationships

NOTE 1.12
Networks may be planned or unplanned.

NOTE 1.13
Formal communication is business related.

NOTE 1.14
Informal communication can be business related or personal.
The following Communication Note provides additional information about the advantages of cultivating an organizational grapevine.

**COMMUNICATION NOTE**

*A Sweet and Sour Look at the Grapevine*  Every organization has a grapevine, but not every organization uses it effectively.

When used to provide comprehensive, honest information to employees in an easy-to-understand manner, the grapevine fills information gaps. Professionals who use the grapevine in this way will find it a useful resource that can help them assess the morale of the organization, understand employees’ anxieties, and evaluate formal communication efforts. If an organization’s managers ignore or attempt to suppress the grapevine, however, the likely result will be low morale, low productivity, misinformation, and misunderstandings—factors that lead to worker resignations.

In order to take full advantage of the grapevine, managers should:

- be as open, honest, and complete as possible when communicating
- monitor the grapevine to learn whether formal messages have been understood or need restating
- identify and work with those who are key purveyors of grapevine information
- ask employees how they use the grapevine

—Lorenzo Sierra, Aon

**SERIAL COMMUNICATION**

A great deal of the information flowing vertically and horizontally within an organization involves three or more individuals. For example, job instructions are developed by managers and transmitted to the supervisors who report to them. The supervisors, in turn, transmit the instructions to the workers under their direction. This communication pattern is called *serial communication*.

In serial communication, messages are usually changed—sometimes dramatically—as they are sent from one member of the chain to another. Because each sender may omit, modify, or add details to the message as he or she relays it, special precautions are necessary. Four techniques will assist in maintaining the accuracy of and achieving understanding with serial communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senders should</th>
<th>Receivers should</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Keep the message simple</td>
<td>- Take notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Request feedback</td>
<td>- Repeat the message</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Although serial communication is typically oral, e-mail has increased its presence in written form. The ability to forward messages without paraphrasing them minimizes or eliminates the distortion customary in oral serial messages. This advantage is lost, however, when those who receive the message add to or comment on it before passing it along. Having to read the additional information can place a burden on the receiver.

**NOTE 1.15**
Serial communication is chain transmission of information.

**NOTE 1.16**
Serial communication may be oral or written.
External Communication Patterns

External communication flows between a business organization and the entities with which it interacts. Companies have many external contacts such as customers, suppliers, competitors, the media, governmental agencies, and the general public. These contacts may be domestic or international. The information that flows between a business and its external receivers can be either written or oral. Letters, reports, orders, invoices, and Web pages illustrate external written communication; telephone calls and advertisements broadcast over radio or television are examples of external oral communication.

Although external communication is typically formal, it may occur informally as well. Whenever an employee comments about work-related matters to someone not affiliated with the organization, informal external communication has occurred. The external audience could be a neighbor, a friend, someone to whom the worker has just been introduced at a party, or someone who accidentally overhears a conversation. Employees represent their organizations both on and off the job; therefore, they should demonstrate good communication skills in their professional and their social interactions.

Literally thousands of formal and informal communications take place every day. Effective communication enhances both individual and organizational success.

The Communication Process

Understanding the communication process can help you become a better communicator. The following sections focus on the components of the communication process model and ways to implement the model successfully.

A Communication Process Model

The best way to study the communication process is to analyze a model of it. An understanding of the communication process model shown in Figure 1.3 will strengthen your performance as a communicator.

The communication process model operates in an environment that includes the sender, the message, the receiver, feedback, and communication barriers. The communication environment includes all things perceived by the participants in that environment; namely, all things perceived by the senses—seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting.
The communication environment is complex and distracting. Overcoming distractions is necessary to achieve the goals of business communication. In addition, communicators must recognize that each organization has its own culture, a personality that affects the communication environment and the way the communication process is implemented. Leaders (past and present), traditions, attitudes, and philosophies determine each organization’s culture. An organization may be formal, as indicated by conservative clothing, limited access to leaders, and a preference for written communication. On the other hand, an organization may be informal—casual dress, open-door policies, and a preference for oral communication. Other factors influencing the culture are the organization’s values relating to diversity, seniority, friendliness, teamwork, individuality, and ethics. An organization’s culture can be dynamic, changing with its size and leadership. Effective business communicators adapt to and positively influence the development of their organizations’ cultures.

**Sender’s and Receiver’s Roles**

The sender and the receiver have important responsibilities in the communication process. If both fulfill their roles, the communication will be successful.

**SENDER’S ROLE**

In the communication process the sender initiates the message. The sender may be a writer, a speaker, or one who simply gestures. The sender’s role in the communication process includes (1) selecting the type of message, (2) analyzing the receiver, (3) using the you-viewpoint, (4) encouraging feedback, and (5) removing communication barriers.

**RECEIVER’S ROLE**

The receiver is the listener, reader, or observer in the communication process. The receiver’s role includes (1) listening or reading carefully, (2) being open to different types of senders and to new ideas, (3) making notes when necessary, (4) providing appropriate feedback to the sender, and (5) asking questions to clarify the message.

Remember, the sender has a greater responsibility for the success of communication than does the receiver. How you can successfully fulfill your role as the initiator of the communication process is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

**Communication Types and Channels**

There are two types of communication: verbal and nonverbal. Verbal communication uses words; nonverbal communication does not. Although many people associate the term only with spoken words, verbal communication actually includes both written and oral messages.

All communications travel from their sender to their receiver(s) through channels. Written message channels include memos, letters, e-mail, notes, reports, telegrams, newsletters, and news releases. These items may include diagrams, drawings, charts, and tables. Oral message channels take many forms including face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, voice mail, in-person conferences, video conferences, and speeches.

Senders must consider several things as they prepare to select the type of message they will send and the channel through which they will send it. Answering the questions listed in the following Tips and Hints will help you when you must make those choices.
Selecting Message Type and Channel

When selecting the type of message to be used and the channel through which it will pass, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Do I need a permanent record of this communication?** If yes, choose a letter (external audience), a memo (internal audience), an e-mail message (either internal or external audience), or a report (either internal or external audience). Written messages can have historic and legal value.

- **Will my receiver(s) readily accept the message?** If yes, a written message is appropriate. If no, oral communication is preferred. The ability to convey emotion and to react to feedback make face-to-face oral communication the best format for persuading receivers or conveying bad news. The size of and distance from the audience must also be considered.

- **Where and how large is the audience for the message?** Face-to-face oral communication can be effective if the sender and receiver(s) are in the same location. A telephone call may work if the number of receivers is small. Written communication works best when it is impractical to bring receivers together or when the message doesn’t warrant the personal touch of face-to-face communication.

- **Is the message long or complex?** If yes, select written communication. The writer can draft and revise the message before it is sent, and the receiver can refer to it as often as necessary to understand the message. Visual aids may supplement the written text.

- **Is timeliness a factor?** Do I need immediate feedback? Use face-to-face or telephone communication for urgent messages or when immediate feedback is important. In some circumstances, e-mail and fax may be viable alternatives. Letters or memos are often used to confirm messages conveyed orally.

- **Is credibility a concern?** Written messages are perceived as being more credible than oral messages. E-mail messages have less credibility than documents displayed on an organization’s letterhead or presented as a report.

Nonverbal messages can be conveyed by both people and objects. The human channels through which these messages pass include gestures and facial expressions. Object-based nonverbal message channels include the appearance and layout of a document and the audio and visual clarity of a videotaped presentation. Nonverbal communication supplements verbal communication. As noted in the following Communication Note, nonverbal communication can be powerful. When there is a conflict between a speaker’s words and actions or between a document’s contents and appearance, the receiver will most likely believe the nonverbal message.

**Analysis of the Receiver for the You–Viewpoint**

The sender’s most important task in the communication process is to analyze the receiver for the you–viewpoint. The you–viewpoint means that the sender gives primary consideration to the receiver’s point of view when composing and sending messages. This is the most powerful concept in business communication, the key to achieving common understanding. To use the you–viewpoint, you must first analyze your receiver.

**Analyzing the Receiver**

No two receivers are alike. You must learn as much as possible about how a particular receiver or group of receivers thinks and feels, in general and with respect to the
situation about which you will communicate. Specifically, you must analyze the receiver(s) in four areas—knowledge, interests, attitudes, and emotional reaction.

**KNOWLEDGE**

Begin the analysis with a review of each receiver’s education and experience. Some of the questions you might ask are:

- What is my receiver’s highest level of education?
- Does my receiver have education specifically related to the topic of my message?
- How much work experience does my receiver have?
- How much of my receiver’s work experience relates to the specific topic of my message?
- Does the receiver have prior experience interacting with me? with my organization?

Answers to these questions will help you decide the vocabulary level of your message, the extent to which you will be able to include technical terms, and the amount of detail the receiver will require.

**INTERESTS**

Second, analyze the receiver’s interests. The sender will want to ask the following questions:

- What are the receiver’s concerns? needs?
- Does the receiver have a particular motive? seek a particular outcome?

A receiver’s position and level of authority may influence the nature of her or his interest in a situation. For example, an employee responsible for production will have a greater interest in the technical details of machine repair than will the manager to

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**NOTE 1.24**

Analyze the receiver’s knowledge.

**NOTE 1.25**

Analyze the receiver’s interests.

**NOTE 1.26**

Position and level of authority affect interests.

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*Nonverbal Communication Can Help Servers Get Better Tips*

Although the size of the check is the major factor in determining the amount of a tip, it is by no means the only factor. Consider the following nonverbal communication methods that have been shown to produce tips for servers:

- Squatting at the table to look customers in the eye
- Smiling
- Touching diners on the shoulder
- Placing the check on a tray decorated with a credit card logo
- Writing *thank you* on the check
- Bringing candy with the check

Drawing a happy face on the back of the check also boosts tips . . . but only for female servers; male servers who apply this technique decrease their take!

Reprinted with the permission of The Associated Press
whom he or she reports. The manager’s primary interests may be the timing and cost of the solution. A careful analysis of your receiver’s interest will help you determine what content to include in your message and the approach you take in organizing it.

**ATTITUDES**

Third, examine the attitudes of the receiver. You’ll want to ask the following questions:

- What values, beliefs, biases, and viewpoints does the receiver have?
- What words or symbols will make a positive impression on the receiver? a negative impression?
- What ideas can be used effectively to communicate with this receiver?

Among the many attributes that can affect receiver attitudes are status, power, personality, expectations, nationality, and culture. Let us use the last attribute—culture—as an example. Generally speaking, people raised in the Japanese culture prefer to communicate indirectly. Therefore, a person of Japanese heritage might use the phrase “very difficult” rather than say “No.” Those raised according the the German culture, on the other hand, favor directness; they tend to get to the point at the beginning of or very early in the message.

Culture can influence communications within a country as well as those that cross its borders. The population of the United States includes those with Hispanic, Asian, African, Native American, Polish, and many other heritages. Cultural diversity exists in other countries as well. Citizens of Canada, for example, have strong ties to the customs and traditions of England, Scotland, Ireland, France, India, Africa, Russia, and many other countries.

Knowing about a receiver’s cultural heritage and nationality will help achieve the you–viewpoint in both verbal and nonverbal communication. The meaning of a gesture can vary dramatically from country to country and among cultures. An up/down nod of the head may be interpreted as yes in some cultures and as no in others. Using white paper as giftwrap will signal joy in some cultures, death in others. You will learn more about culture and workplace diversity in Chapter 2.

**EMOTIONAL REACTION**

Finally, anticipate the receiver’s emotional reaction to your message. Will the message make the receiver happy? make the receiver angry? leave the receiver unaffected? Your assessment will assist you in determining whether you should use a direct or an indirect approach. In most cultures, people will accept pleasant or neutral messages when you give the main point in your opening (direct approach). A message that could disappoint or anger a receiver, however, might gain greater acceptance if the sender offers an explanation, reason, or other supporting information before giving the main point (indirect approach).

Analyzing your receiver will assist you in every communication situation. It will enable you to make effective use of one of the most important concepts of business communication—the you–viewpoint.

**USING THE YOU–VIEWPOINT**

Using the you–viewpoint requires that you understand your receiver’s point of view. It means that you will give your receiver’s knowledge, interests, attitudes, and emotional reaction primary consideration as you develop and send your message. To achieve the
goals of business communication—understanding, response, relationship, and goodwill—the sender should always use the you–viewpoint.

Your analysis of the receiver will enable use of the you–viewpoint. You can use your understanding of the receiver’s knowledge to influence the ideas you include and the amount of explanation you give. In addition, you will be able to use words the receiver will understand and accept. You can design the message to address the receiver’s concerns, needs, and motivations. Determining your receiver’s attitudes will assist you in avoiding or carefully handling negative situations. Finally, anticipating your receiver’s emotional reaction will influence whether you use a direct or an indirect approach in your message.

If you are sending the same message to a group of receivers and you want to achieve the business communication goals with every member of that group, each individual in the group must be analyzed as fully as possible. Then, if the receivers are of equal importance to your goals, you must compose the message for the member(s) of the group with the least knowledge about, the least interest in, and the greatest emotional opposition to the subject.

The opposite of the you–viewpoint is the I–viewpoint, which includes the me–, my–, our–, and we–viewpoints. The I–viewpoint means the sender composes messages from his or her point of view instead of the receiver’s point of view. Poor communicators use the I–viewpoint and choose message content based on their own knowledge, interests, attitudes, and emotional reaction. Only rarely will an I–viewpoint message achieve the goals of business communication.

Examine these contrasting examples of sentences from opposite viewpoints:

**I–Viewpoint**
- I think your report is excellent.
- I am really excited about your having earned your CPA.
- You simply do not understand what I am saying.

**You–Viewpoint**
- You wrote an excellent report.
- Congratulations for earning your CPA!
- Perhaps an example will help make the instructions clearer.

As these examples show, you–viewpoint messages respect and emphasize the receiver’s perceptions and feelings. Note that I in some of the I–viewpoint examples has been changed to you and your in the you–viewpoint examples. This type of change seems obvious, but the you–viewpoint requires much more than simple word changes. It requires that the message be receiver-centered, not self-centered. It requires that you emphasize the receiver’s interests and benefits rather than your own. When you use the you–viewpoint, the receiver is apt to respond positively to both you and the content of your message. Although using the you–viewpoint may mean you sometimes write passively, the results are worth it.

The recommendation that you use the you–viewpoint in your messages does not suggest that you ignore basic values or compromise ethics. Complimenting someone just so he or she will do what you want is inappropriate. Sincerity, honesty, and forthrightness are basic to all successful business communication.

It will be helpful now to look at an example of a message written in the you–viewpoint. The goal of the message in Figure 1.4 is to persuade readers.
The sender’s role in implementing the communication process includes providing for feedback from the receiver. Recall that appropriate receiver response is one of the goals of business communication. To achieve this goal, you can

- Ask directly or indirectly for the response
- Assist the receiver in giving the response

When a job applicant submits a letter and a resume to a company, he or she wants the receiver to respond by extending an invitation to interview for a job. To make it easier for the receiver to respond, the sender should be sure the message clearly asks for an interview and includes a telephone number and address where the sender can be reached easily. In a written sales message, the sender should ask for the order and provide a toll-free telephone number, an e-mail address, or an easy-to-use order form. If the communication is oral, the sender can ask tactfully whether the receiver understands the message or has any questions. In critical situations the sender might ask the receiver to repeat the message and explain his or her understanding of it. When speaking to a group, a sender can gain feedback by observing the audience, asking questions, or administering an evaluation. Because the most important goal of business communication is that the receiver understand the message, feedback from the receiver to the sender is essential to confirm that understanding.
Communication Barriers

Although knowledge of the communication process and skill in implementing it are basic to effective communication, the sender must also deal with barriers that interfere with the communication process. A communication barrier is any factor that interferes with the success of the communication process (see Figure 1.3). These barriers may occur between any two of the communication process steps or may affect all the steps in the process. The most crucial barriers are discussed in the next sections.

Word Choice

Choosing words that are too difficult, too technical, or too easy for your receiver can be a communication barrier. If words are too difficult or too technical, the receiver may not understand them; if they are too simple, the reader could become bored or be insulted. In either case, the message falls short of meeting its goals. As you will recall, analyzing the receiver will lead to determining the vocabulary level of the message. Therefore, senders must be careful to choose the correct words for their messages. Refer to Business English Seminar E for examples of many words that are easily confused or frequently misused.

Word choice is also a consideration when communicating with receivers for whom English is not the primary language. These receivers may not be familiar with colloquial English—the casual or informal way in which the language may be used.

Denotative Versus Connotative Meaning

A receiver and a sender may attach different meanings to the words used in a message. A denotation is the specific dictionary definition for a word. A connotation is any other meaning a word suggests to a receiver based on his or her experiences, interests, attitudes, and emotions. Connotative meanings can also be the result of slang or sarcasm. Senders should analyze their receivers as thoroughly as possible to determine what connotations those receivers might attach to specific words.

If you said to one of your subordinates, “Well, that certainly was fast work!” you may have meant the work was completed in less time than you expected. The receiver, however, may attach a different meaning to the statement. Based on what he or she is thinking and feeling at the moment, the receiver may think you meant the work was slow, was done too quickly, or was done improperly. Other specific examples of connotations versus denotations include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Possible Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assertive</td>
<td>energetic, pushy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compromise</td>
<td>adjust, give in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equitable</td>
<td>fair, equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frugal</td>
<td>thrifty, cheap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funny</td>
<td>humorous, unusual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications and Inferences

An implication is a meaning given through connotation rather than through specific details. An inference is a conclusion drawn from connotation rather than specific
details. Although inferences and implications need not occur as a set, a speaker who implies something can cause a receiver to infer a meaning different from what was intended. For example, a person who says that his work is undervalued may mean to suggest that he doesn’t get enough positive feedback from his supervisor. Without specific detail, however, the receiver of the message might infer that the speaker believes his salary isn’t high enough. To guard against this communication barrier, senders should always use specific language and receivers should clarify meaning by asking questions.

Implications may be made and inferences may be drawn from actions as well as words. For example, suppose that two employees laugh as their supervisor passes. The supervisor may infer that the workers are making fun of her or him. The workers, however, may have wanted to signal that their morale is high or, more likely, to signal nothing at all.

In spite of the problems they can cause, inferences and implications play a role in workplace communication. Intelligent and appropriate inferences are essential to initiative and follow-through on the job; implying rather than directly stating bad news can soften its impact on the receiver. The challenge is to ensure that inferences and implications are appropriate. Carefully analyzing the receiver and situation will help you to meet this challenge.

**Punctuation, Spelling, Grammar, and Sentence Structure**

Incorrect grammar and poor sentence structure could hinder the receiver’s understanding of a spoken or written message. Punctuation and spelling errors may create barriers to understanding a written message. As the number of errors increases, readers often stop reading for content and begin editing. The ultimate result could be that the sender loses credibility. The errors suggest that the person who sent the message either does not know the basics of the language or was too careless to correct the problems. Neither explanation creates a positive impression of the person who sent the message. The following Communication Note describes a situation that had both monetary and image implications for a firm.

**Errors Have $ and Image Implications**

A vice president for the firm that prepared a plaque to be presented to actor James Earl Jones at a celebration of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described the error as “a very unfortunate mistake.” The problem? The plaque read “Thank you James Earl Ray for keeping the dream alive.” Ray was the person convicted of assassinating Dr. King.

Event sponsors declined the engraver’s offer to redo the plaque and accused the company of being “culturally insensitive.” Another company was located, and the damaged plaque was repaired in time to be presented at the celebration.

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**Type of Message**

Selecting a message type appropriate to the situation is essential to communication success. For example, communicating complex job instructions orally will most likely fail because the receiver must rely solely on his or her memory of what was said—or per-
haps memory plus sketchy notes. A written message to which the worker can refer as needed will achieve better results. An in-person oral message is desirable when resolving a conflict between employees. Both the sender and the receiver can take full advantage of the nonverbal cues that accompany the spoken words.

If the message is a report on an evaluation of alternative manufacturing processes, the type of message will depend on who will receive it. The report may be written or oral, long or short, technical or simple; graphic aids might be used to support verbal content. Often, more than one type of message can be used for the same communication situation.

Generally, the higher the level in an organization to which a message is sent, the more concise the message should be. Top managers view time as a precious commodity; therefore, a brief summary may be more suitable than a long, detailed report. Managers who have greater involvement with operating procedures may derive greater benefits from long, technical messages.

**Appearance of the Message**

The appearance of a message affects its readability and influences a receiver’s acceptance of its content. Smudges, sloppy corrections, light print, wrinkled paper, and poor handwriting may distract the reader and become barriers to effective communication. Using emoticons and keying text only in uppercase letters can be barriers in e-mail. Senders should examine every document before it is sent to ensure that its appearance does not interfere with its potential for success.

**Appearance of the Sender**

The credibility of an oral message can be reduced if the appearance of the sender is unattractive or unacceptable to the receiver. In addition, unintended nonverbal signals can distract a receiver and influence the way an oral message is received. For example, if you smile when you sympathetically give bad news, your motives may be suspect.

If the credibility of the message is questioned, the quality of the receiver’s understanding, acceptance, and response will be reduced. For success in oral business communication, senders should be sure that their dress, cleanliness, and facial and body movements are appropriate to their professions and to the communication situations they encounter. Wearing a tuxedo to a beach party is as inappropriate as wearing a swimsuit to the office.

**Environmental Factors**

The environment in which communication occurs can interfere with the success of a message. A noisy machine in an area where a supervisor is trying to speak with an employee
can become a distracting environmental factor. When a supervisor’s desk separates him or her from a worker during a meeting, the desk can intimidate the worker and limit his or her ability to respond to the message. Other examples of environmental factors that can serve as barriers to effective communication include room temperature, odor, light, color, and distance.

The sender has the responsibility to try to eliminate environmental factors that are communication barriers. If the room in which an oral presentation is to be given is too warm, the sender should try to get the thermostat turned down or to have the windows opened. If the receiver cannot see to read a message because of limited light, the sender should arrange for more light. Environmental barriers can usually be eliminated or reduced, often before communication begins.

**Receiver’s Capability**

If the receiver has a physical or mental disability that causes a communication barrier, the sender should recognize this in choosing message type and channel. The receiver may have a hearing impairment or a learning disability. The sender can remove or compensate for such barriers in the communication process by carefully selecting the form of the message and by providing for appropriate feedback mechanisms. Most of the solutions are clear choices. Increased volume, printed text, or a sign language interpreter can help overcome the potential barrier of a hearing impairment. When a visual impairment threatens the success of a written message, print can be enlarged or the message can be given orally.

In recent years considerable progress has been made in providing for full participation of persons with disabilities in all fields. Effective communicators will focus on their receivers’ abilities and will work with receivers to ensure communication success.

**Listening**

Failure to listen is a common barrier to successful oral communication. Listening effectively is not easy. One reason listening is challenging is that most people speak 100 to 200 words a minute but are capable of listening to material of average difficulty at 500 or more words a minute. This difference allows listeners’ minds to wander to topics other than the message. In addition, listeners may tune out a speaker and begin thinking about how they will respond to the message. Listening is a skill that can and must be learned.

Senders can use several methods to overcome poor listening as a communication barrier. Receivers can be reminded to listen carefully, or they can be asked questions periodically to determine the extent of their comprehension. In some circumstances a poor listener may be encouraged to study and learn improved listening skills. One of the most effective ways to remove poor listening as a barrier to communication is to improve the quality of the message and the way in which it is conveyed. Thoroughly analyzing the audience before designing the message will help a sender plan, organize, and deliver an appropriate oral message.

**Other Communication Barriers**

Several of the most common communication barriers and ways to remove them have been discussed in the preceding sections. In attempting to improve your communication effectiveness, you must also eliminate other barriers. For example, some receiver-related communication barriers include lack of interest, lack of knowledge, different cultural perceptions, language difficulty, emotional state, and bias. The sender must do
everything possible to remove these receiver-related communication barriers. Information in Tips and Hints will help overcome barriers associated with cultural differences.

**TIPS AND HINTS**

**Enhance Your Multicultural Communication Skills**

Learn to enhance your multicultural communication skills by following these diversity action steps:

- Expect multicultural misunderstandings to occur sometimes.
- Recognize that our best intentions may be undermined by old assumptions.
- Catch ourselves in these assumptions in order to communicate more clearly and fairly.
- Learn about the cultural styles and values of different groups; understand and appreciate that individual differences exist within groups.
- Don’t generalize about individuals because of their particular culture; many individual differences exist within groups.
- Avoid hot buttons or blunders like ethnic jokes, sexual expressions, racially based assumptions, inappropriate touching, and stereotyped job assignments.
- Use “we’re all in this together” language to express trust and to foster a spirit of goodwill and partnership.
- Respond to the context and content of a person’s words and deeds, rather than assumed motives.
- Don’t be diverted by style, accent, grammar, or personal appearance; rather judge the merits of the statement or behavior.
- Consciously seek out new multicultural relationships and challenges.


**Summary of Learning Objectives**

**Explain why business communication is important to individuals and organizations.**

Business communication is the process of establishing a common understanding between or among people within a business environment. Good communication skills help individuals enhance self-esteem, become effective employees, and advance in their careers. The quality of an organization’s internal and external communications affects its success.

**List and explain the goals of business communication.**

Business communication has four goals: (1) Receiver understanding—the receiver understands the message as the sender intended it to be understood. (2) Receiver response—the receiver demonstrates his or her understanding of a message by providing an appropriate response. (3) Favorable relationship—the people involved in the process relate to each other positively, personally, and professionally. (4) Organizational goodwill—the receiver has confidence in the sender’s organization and is willing to continue the business relationship.
Describe the patterns of business communication.

Business communication may be internal or external, formal or informal, work related or personal. Messages may flow vertically upward from workers, downward from managers, or horizontally between or among workers who report to the same supervisor. Serial communication can occur in either horizontal or vertical communication. Messages can also flow diagonally between or among workers regardless of unit or status. The diagonal pattern is known as a network. The grapevine is one type of informal network communication.

Explain the communication process.

Communication occurs in an open environment that includes the sender, the message, the receiver, feedback, and communication barriers. The sender will analyze the receiver and then design a message that reflects what was learned through that analysis. The message should focus on the receiver’s interests, encourage feedback, and eliminate or minimize communication barriers. The receiver must listen or read carefully and be open to senders and to their ideas; making notes, asking questions, and providing feedback are also part of the receiver’s role in the process.

Identify communication barriers and describe ways to remove them.

The primary barrier to effective communication is failure to use the you–viewpoint. Other barriers include word choice; the situation, spelling, grammar, and sentence structure; appearance of the sender or the message; environmental factors; type of message; receiver capability; and meaning. Analyzing the receiver and taking the you–viewpoint will eliminate or minimize these and other communication barriers that might arise.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are both internal and external communication important to an organization? (Objectives 1 and 3)
2. Name the four goals of business communication. Identify the one that is the most important, and explain why it has this distinction. (Objective 2)
3. How can assessing a receiver’s knowledge help a message sender overcome word choice as a communication barrier? (Objectives 2 and 5)
4. Technology. How have technologies such as e-mail and voice mail affected grapevine communication? (Objective 3)
5. Discuss the networks to which you belong. Identify the basis for the network—the thing the members have in common. (Objective 3)
6. Based on your work or school experience, discuss how roles or status have influenced the way in which people communicated. (Objective 3)
7. Assume that you’ve just accepted a part-time job that will require you to work Tuesday and Thursday evenings, all day on Saturday, and from noon to closing on Sun-
day. The income from the job will enable you to remain in school. Analyze each of the following people to help you determine how to tell them your good news: (Objective 4)

a. Your parents, who expect you to attend your grandparents’ 65th wedding anniversary celebration three weeks from Sunday.

b. Elena, your study partner, who works Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights. You and she had planned to spend this Sunday studying for a major exam you’ll both take at 8 a.m. on Monday. Elena hasn’t pressed you to repay the $27 you borrowed two months ago.

c. Terry, your eight-year-old “buddy” in a mentoring program for disadvantaged youth. You’ve promised to be Terry’s guest at the circus this Saturday afternoon; Terry earned the tickets in a school read-a-thon.

8. Describe a communication situation you have experienced or observed that succeeded because the sender and the receiver were able to identify and remove potential communication barriers. The situation need not be work related. (Objectives 4 and 5)

9. Is it possible to use the you–viewpoint and transmit ethical messages? Discuss. (Objective 5)

10. How does each of the following sayings relate to communication? (Objectives 2, 3, and 5)

a. A picture is worth a thousand words.

b. Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

c. Seeing is believing.

d. Actions speak louder than words.

Application Exercises

1. InfoTrac. E-mail. Informal mentoring has a long history of helping new workers become acquainted with the communication environment and style within an organization. More recently, formal mentoring programs have emerged to accomplish this purpose and more. Learn more about formal mentoring programs by reading InfoTrac article A20825427, “Mentoring Programs: They’re an Inexpensive Way to Tap Your Company’s Talent to Groom Future Leaders,” by Karen Hildebrand. Then, send your instructor an e-mail in which you respond to the following questions:

a. Why does mentoring pair people who don’t have a supervisory relationship with one another?

b. What role does communication play in the meetings between mentor and mentee?

c. How does “feedback” contribute to the mentoring process?

2. Teamwork. Form a four-person team. Have each team member select one of the business communication goals and prepare a one-minute presentation that explains and illustrates it. Practice, then join with another group and make the presentations to each other. (Objective 2)

3. Teamwork. Obtain a copy of your school’s administrative organization chart. As a group, identify the vertical and horizontal communication patterns suggested by the structure. Then, interview one of the administrators to learn about whether/how network (diagonal) communication occurs within the structure. As your instructor directs, report your results in a one-page memo or orally to the class.

4. Select an appropriate message type and channel for each of the following situations. Justify your choices. (Objective 3)
a. Effective the first of next month, the cost of dependent coverage under your company’s group insurance policy will rise. Your task is to inform 300 employees who work at the three facilities in your state.

b. You want to invite the new manager in your division to have lunch with you today. The manager works on another floor of your building.

c. An employee you supervise has been named Volunteer of the Year in your community.

d. A sweater shown on page 6 of your company’s fall catalog is no longer available in green. You want to persuade those who order the item to select another color.

e. The proposal you have written must reach your client’s office by 3 p.m. today. Your offices are in the same community.

5. Analyze the receiver’s knowledge, interests, attitudes, and emotional state in the following communication situation: (Objective 4)

You are a public accountant writing a letter to Wilson Brooks, a contractor who builds homes. Mr. Brooks prepares his own tax returns with occasional assistance from your firm. He has had last year’s return, which he prepared himself, audited by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS did not allow some of the deductions Mr. Brooks listed; therefore, he has been told he owes $3,750 in additional taxes. Mr. Brooks has sent you a copy of the IRS audit report. He asks you to review the report and advise him on what he should do.

6. Modify the following sentences to make them reflect the you–viewpoint. Be sure not to change the meaning of the sentences in your revised versions. (Objective 4)

a. The meeting time has been changed from 4 p.m. to 3 p.m.; don’t be late.

b. I have enclosed a postage-paid reply card for you to use when ordering from us.

c. We have received your order and a check for the amount you owe for the merchandise.

d. I set extremely high standards for myself and for those who work for me; your work isn’t meeting my standards.

e. What did you do to this CD player? I’ll have to charge you at least $200 to repair it.

f. Be quiet and listen to these important instructions.

h. Your request for a promotion is denied. Talk to me again next month.

i. Don’t be late again. Give the monthly reports to Amanda no later than the 20th of the month.

j. Make no mistakes. The report must be completely accurate.

7. Words and phrases can have connotative meanings not only in business communication but also in classroom communication. For each item in the following list, identify what a teacher might mean when he or she speaks the word or phrase and what a student might interpret it to mean when he or she hears it during class. (Objective 5)

a. Okay.

b. Are there any questions?

c. This is important.

d. You need to . . . (study, do your homework)

8. Global. Select a culture other than your own. Gather information on that culture’s values, attitudes, biases, and viewpoints. As your instructor directs, interview a student or faculty member from another culture or use Internet or library resources to conduct your research. Share your findings with the class. (Objective 5)
9. Observe a clerk, cafeteria worker, or custodial worker at your school. Record the number of nonverbal messages he or she conveys in five minutes. Identify each cue as positive or negative. (Objective 5)

10. E-mail. Teamwork. Think about a supervisor or teacher you would describe as your favorite.
   a. Make a list of the things that make her or him stand apart from others you have known (e.g., is he or she a good listener? Does she or he respond to your verbal and nonverbal feedback?).
   b. Work with another member of the class. Exchange your lists; use e-mail if available. What items appear on both your and your partner’s list? Which items relate to the ability to communicate well? What do your findings tell you about how the ability to communicate well influences someone’s perception of you?
   c. Work alone. Summarize your findings and conclusions in an e-mail to your instructor. Be sure your message is constructed using correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. (Objectives 1, 2, and 5)

There are Web exercises at [http://krizan.swlearning.com](http://krizan.swlearning.com) to accompany this chapter.

**Message Analysis**
Correct the content and word choice errors in the following business memo:

```
TO:       Staff
FROM:     Manager
DATE:     June 1, 200–
SUBJECT:  BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Yesterday, I attended a seminar on business communication. The speaker introduced me to some principals and techniques, and I want to pass some of his advise on to you. Specifically, pay attention to the items below:

• Always analyze the situation. You’ll get farther if you focus on yourself—use the You–Viewpoint!
• Use lots of technical words; readers are impressed by them.
• Long messages are better then brief ones because you may include more details.
• Don’t waste time proofreading e-mail; its meant to be quick and dirty, and you can al ways send another one if you make a mistake.

You may already have known these things, but a reminder never hurts. Discuss these items between yourselves, and let me know if you have any questions.
```
5. If you would like to order a subscription for a friend, record his name and address on the enclosed card and mail it to us now, we’ll bill you later.

6. The meeting site has been changed from Sam’s office to Conference room A, therefore, more people can attend.

7. Joan Bob and Alicia was selected to be the departments representatives to the counsel.

8. While their outward appearance remains relatively unchanged designers note that lockers are larger more durable and can be customized for special purposes.

9. Any staff member who may come into contact with a biohazard during their duties, should have access to protective devices such as gloves masks and goggles.

10. The short term outlook is dim however long term projections are positive.